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THE POLITICAL CONTROL OF THE SOVIET ARMED FORCES(U)  
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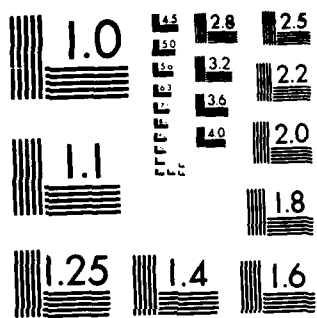
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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

THE POLITICAL CONTROL OF THE  
SOVIET ARMED FORCES

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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# ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: William Ray Brownlee, COL, IN

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At the end of the Civil War in 1921, the Red Army was a badly equipped, poorly trained, and ill disciplined force. Today it is a modern, technologically sophisticated and highly effective army. This change has been most dramatic and overshadows similar advances made by the USSR as an industrial power. Mikhail S. Gorbachev came to power in March of 1985. Since that time he has made twelve changes in the Soviet High Command. The latest was to replace the Defense Minister. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the nature of the political control of the Soviet military, its history, effectiveness, and effects of Perestroika on that relationship.

## INTRODUCTION

"The Soviet Army looms like a vast cloud on the horizon of the Western world." These introductory words are taken from Liddell Hart's book on the Red Army published over 24 years ago. Yet, they are even more true today since Soviet military forces have grown tremendously and our ability to monitor that growth has also evolved with advanced intelligence and reconnaissance means.

This ability to approximate with some confidence the size and equipment of the Soviet military is useful, but it also leads to the problem of "mirror-imaging"; the fallacy that their military is just like ours -- only there are more of them. However, their military is not like ours; rather, it has unique traditions, institutions, and a history, totally unlike that of Western armies. Whereas Western governments (as well as their military forces) attempt to keep the military out of politics and vice-versa, the Soviet Union does not. In fact, it demands political involvement, obtains it, and thereby controls the only domestic force capable of overthrowing the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from its leadership role. The purpose of this paper is to discuss how the CPSU controls the Soviet military, and the effects of Perestroika on that relationship.

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

At the end of the Civil War of 1921, the Red Army was a badly equipped, poorly trained, and ill disciplined force. Today



it is a modern, technologically sophisticated and highly effective army. This change has been most dramatic and overshadows similar advances made by the USSR as an industrial power.

In order to have a better understanding of the unique relationship between the Soviet military establishment and the Communist Party which controls it, a short overview of its historical development is necessary.

Tsarist Russia in 1917 was at war with Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire and was on the verge of collapse. The army was demoralized, disorganized and lacked the weapons to continue the fight. Desertions and mutinies were commonplace. There was a great food shortage, and riots and strikes were the order of the day.

This chaos opened the way for Lenin and company to implement the revolution which overthrew the Tsar. The Provisional Government tried to restore order and negotiate peace with the enemy. It failed on both counts, and in October, the Communist-led revolutionaries put down the Provisional Government and itself seized power. This did not go well for Lenin; and in January, 1918, Leon Trotsky organized a standing army based on traditional concepts. Thus the Soviet Army was born.

In March of 1918, Lenin accepted Germany's terms and a peace treaty was negotiated. The tsarist counter-revolution supported by the Allies gained strength, and the new army had to turn its attention to this internal threat. By the end of 1921, these forces were defeated, hostilities had ceased and the young Red Army had weathered its first test.

After Lenin's death in January, 1924, Stalin took over. He distrusted the military as a threat to his power but was also aware of the need for a strong army. Between 1928 and 1938, the Red Army acquired modern weapons, particularly tanks and artillery, and began to motorize the infantry. By 1939 the size of the standing Army would rise to 1,300,000.<sup>1</sup>

Stalin, an absolutist, started a purge within the Army in 1937. More than 35,000 officers were dismissed, imprisoned or shot.<sup>2</sup> Within a few years the Soviet Army, not fully recovered from the purges of 1937-38, was called upon to defend the USSR against Hitler's armies. The results of World War II require no discussion.

The relationship that the USSR had with its Western Allies deteriorated rapidly after 1945. This was due to Stalin's foreign policy and use of the Soviet Army to achieve his political goals in Europe. This era ended with his death in 1953.

The Soviet military establishment today reflects a wide variety of influences. Some are rooted in its history, to include the traditional role of the Party in military affairs. Some relate to the nation's geographic position as a vast and largely land-locked power. Another is rapidly changing military technology which fosters new doctrines and concepts. Finally, there is a new perception among Soviet leaders since World War II as to the nature of the threat to the homeland.

## POLITICAL WORK WITHIN THE MILITARY

The Soviet armed forces are tightly controlled by the Communist Party's civilian leaders, who occupy key positions in both Party and Government. Civilian control is exercised in several ways. One department of the Central Committee CPSU exercises political control of the Armed Forces and works through the Main Political Administration (Glavnoye Politicheskoye Upravleniye) headed by General of the Army A.D. Lizichev.<sup>3</sup> Most of the top echelon in the Soviet high command are also high in the Party hierarchy, e.g., they are candidate members of the Committee.

The Defense Council is composed of General Secretary Gorbachev, Army General D. Yazov, and other top figures in the Politburo. Final individual authority for military matters resides with M.S. Gorbachev, General Secretary of the CPSU. The collective responsibility and authority for defense matters in the Soviet Union are vested in the Politburo of the Communist Party. Politburo decisions on military issues are ratified by the analogous government organizations.

The focal point for national security policymaking, however, is the USSR Defense Council, chaired by Gorbachev and tasked with coordinating the activities of all state organizations on military-related matters. The Defense Council also appears to play an important role in the policy formulation process, functioning as a clearinghouse for defense recommendations which are then channeled to the Politburo for final approval. Execution of Party policy is the responsibility of the

governmental structure. The Council of Ministers, the top government body, is charged with implementing party policy relating to the armed forces.

As Minister of Defense (MOD), Army General Yazov is the man directly in charge of more than four million men that comprise the Soviet armed forces. General Yazov, an Infantry officer, saw combat at Leningrad, and he has been on active duty for 47 years. His last two assignments before becoming MOD was Commander, Far East Military District and Deputy MOD for personnel. Yazov is well acquainted with all the technological aspects of the Soviet military machine. Further, subject to control by the Politburo and the Defense Council, he is the man in charge of that military machine.

At the top of the Ministry of Defense is the Main Military Council, composed of Yazov, his three first deputy ministers, and ten deputy ministers.<sup>4</sup> The Minister of Defense, advised by his Main Military Council and acting through the General Staff, directly controls the five services, the other main administrations, the military districts, air defense districts, and the fleets.

Although most all of the military officers and armed forces as a whole are either members of the party or the Komsomol, the youth adjunct to the party, it appears that the Party elite does not trust them inasmuch as the Party has two different organizations to insure that military officers stay on the straight and narrow. One of these is the Main Political Administration (MPA), and the other is the military apparatus of the KGB, the secret police.<sup>5</sup>

The Main Political Administration functions as part of the USSR Ministry of Defense and as one of the principal components of the Military Department of the Central Committee of the Party. All of the "party-political work" in the Soviet armed forces is exercised by the Central Committee of the CPSU through the MPA. While the MPA had its roots in the institution of the military commissar, which was established in 1918, the changing character of the Soviet officer corps has led to a substantial modification in the political officer's role.<sup>6</sup>

The Bolshevik Party inherited an army whose trained professional officers were for the most part distrustful or actively hostile toward the new leadership. The Party put a group of politically loyal military commissars in the Armed Forces to insure that the ex-tsarist officers complied with its orders. Today's officer corps consists of individuals born and reared in a CPSU-dominated environment who have been carefully screened for political reliability. Thus the MPA no longer serves merely to insure the execution of Party policy. Today it is the coordinating element for the Party and Komsomol activities in the Armed Forces.<sup>7</sup> It supports military training and tries to improve combat readiness and military discipline.<sup>8</sup> So the MPA now assumes considerable operational responsibilities.

The most important job of the MPA is its responsibility for directing the political education of all military personnel. Further, it reviews the ideological content of the military press, takes part in producing training films, and provides political textbooks and other training aids.<sup>9</sup> In sum, the MPA is

responsible for providing coordination and standardization for the political socialization in the Soviet military. Its policies are implemented through a network of political elements which extend down to the company level.<sup>10</sup>

The MPA occupies a co-position at each level of command from the Ministry of Defense through its five Soviet armed services (Ground, Air, Strategic Rocket, Air Defense, and Naval), down to the maneuver companies and naval vessels which have a political administration, section, or deputy.<sup>11</sup> (See Figure 1) Each of the service's political elements is generally commanded by a two- or three-star general.

The Army, corps, and divisions have political sections, usually run by a lieutenant colonel, who is the commander's "Zampolit" (deputy for political affairs). (See Figure 2) The Zampolits at regimental and battalion levels are in charge of staff sections which include the secretary of the unit's Party bureau, a propagandist, the Komsomol secretary, and the head of the unit's club.<sup>12</sup> (See Figure 3)

At company level the MPA representation has fluctuated, at times having no representation, as well as varying between a Partorg (Party Organizer) and a Zampolit. In August, 1967, the Zampolit was re-established at this level.<sup>13</sup> (See Figure 3)

One Soviet study of party-political work observed, "the deputy commander for political affairs is first and foremost a party functionary." The study further noted, "There is no sphere of Army training, service, and life of which a political worker can say, 'It's none of my business, it doesn't concern me.'"<sup>14</sup>

An examination of the duties of a regimental, battalion, or company political deputy can be most instructive, since political officers at this level comprise the bulk of MPA manpower and accomplish most of the political work in the Soviet armed forces.<sup>15</sup> The political deputy or his staff conducts political instruction, which is provided in two different, two-hour sessions each week. Typical themes are U.S. and British espionage, preservation of state and military secrets, subjects not to be discussed with relatives and friends, and the need for enhancing revolutionary vigilance.<sup>16</sup>

Considering the importance of the political officer and his staff, one can see why this would be a separate career field within the military hierarchy. The political workers located in lower-level units are trained in one of nine military-political schools, most of which were organized in 1967 in response to the Central Committee Resolution on military political work.<sup>17</sup> Some of the larger schools offer specialized training; naval political officers, for example, go to Kiev Higher Naval Political School; officers and staff workers headed for Air Defense units go to Leningrad Higher Military Schools of Air Defense.

The course of study in the political schools includes both military/military technical and political subjects; graduates are commissioned as junior lieutenants.<sup>18</sup> Those officers and workers that are assigned at regimental level or above receive additional training at the Lenin Military-Political Academy.<sup>19</sup> The curriculum at this level includes social sciences, Party-political work, military pedagogy and psychology, military discipline, troop organization, military equipment and military

art.<sup>20</sup> Since these political officers are exposed to this much military information it seems that the Zampolit has an increasing role in military plans and operations.<sup>21</sup>

The political officer is one link in a redundant system of political control of the Soviet armed forces. His function is to insure prompt execution of Communist Party (CPSU) policy within the military hierarchy. He shares this responsibility with the military's network of KGB officers, the Party and Komsomol organs, the military commander, and the military council system. Party and Komsomol organs in the services involve the vast majority of military personnel. Soviet press reports indicate that 80 percent of the draftees are Party or Komsomol members or candidates; approximately 90 percent of the officer corps falls into one of these categories.<sup>22</sup>

The military chain of command insures the execution of Party policy. The officers are carefully screened for political as well as military qualifications, with political reliability an important prerequisite to responsible command positions.

The third source of political control is provided by the military council system, which brings together both military and civilian representatives.<sup>23</sup> The councils are responsible to the Central Committee of the Communist Party (CPSU), the Soviet government, and the Ministry of Defense for the combat readiness of the forces within the military district. The political officer, as a member of the military council at the military district level, is only one of the mechanisms designed to insure the political reliability of the Soviet military establishment and the prompt implementation of CPSU military policy.



One of the primary duties of the Zampolit is to coordinate and conduct comprehensive political training programs for all categories of military servicemen. The Zampolit's first contact with large numbers of troops comes at the regimental level. His position is defined as follows:

The deputy regimental commander for political affairs is subordinate to the regimental commander. He is a direct superior to all personnel of the regiment and is directly responsible for the organization and status of party-political control of the regiment.<sup>24</sup>

Although not stated in the regulation, he is also subordinate to the Zampolit at the next higher headquarters on purely party-political matters.

The duties of the regimental Zampolit are defined by regulation as follows:

Article 71. The Deputy Regimental Commander for Political Affairs is required:

-- to organize and conduct political work, directing it toward the rallying of the personnel around the Communist Party and the Soviet Government and toward the successful fulfillment of tasks of military and political training, toward the maintenance of conscious military preparedness of the regiment, toward the strengthening of unity of command, military discipline and the morale of the personnel;

-- to personally direct the work of training soldiers, sergeants, and officers in the spirit of unlimited devotion to the Soviet Motherland, the Communist Party, and the Soviet Government, of friendship among the peoples of the USSR, of proletarian internationalism and of strict observance of the military oath of conscious obedience to a superior and respect for him, complete fulfillment of the requirements of military regulations and of orders of a superior;

-- to train the personnel in the spirit of military traditions and devotion to one's unit, and to the unit colors as a symbol of military honor, valor, and glory; to popularize the heroic exploits of the soldiers, sergeants and officers;

-- to explain to the servicemen the leading and directing role of the Communist Party, the most important decisions of the Communist Party and of the Soviet Government, to propagandize among them the successes of the construction of communism;

-- to organize and conduct mass political agitation and propaganda, political training and information, and also cultural work among the personnel and families of the servicemen;

-- to guide the political and educational work of the officers of the regiment, learn their performance of duty qualities and political qualities; personally conduct educational work with officers and guide their Marxist-Leninist training;

-- to teach the personnel to recognize the necessity of high political vigilance of conscious fulfillment of their military duty, of the strict safeguarding of military and state secrets;

-- to teach the servicemen hatred toward the enemies of our Motherland and to teach constant readiness in all circumstances and at any cost to defend the state interests of the USSR;

-- to develop in the servicemen a feeling of personal responsibility for the mastering and the maintenance of a constant state of readiness of military equipment and weapons, for the safety and maintenance of military and public property; to teach constant striving to improve one's military skill;

-- to show concern for the food, improvement of living conditions of the soldiers, sergeants and officers, and to know the needs of the personnel and to be concerned with their satisfaction;

-- to establish and constantly maintain contact with the local Party and Soviet organizations;

-- and to give timely reports to the regimental commander and the chief of the political department of the next higher headquarters on the morale of the personnel, about the conduct of political affairs and the political education work.<sup>25</sup>

While there is no political section below the division level, there are about 30 officers in the regiment assigned to political work.<sup>26</sup> This cadre of military-political professionals, under the supervision of the regimental Zampolit, organizes and directs all party and political work in the regiment. (See Figure 3)

The regimental propagandist assists the political officer in directing propaganda work among soldiers and officers by personally conducting lectures and discussion groups. He also selects, trains, and supervises the activities of the propagandist at the company level.

The regimental club director and librarian organize cultural activities for the troops. They prepare reading lists and encourage the men to use the reading materials provided. They also sponsor propaganda movies, lectures, excursions, and various sports events designed to keep the troops occupied during free time.<sup>27</sup>

The company Zampolit provides the first line political contact with the men. He plays a major role in their political education by holding daily discussions with them and by giving them the Party interpretation of current events in the news. Based on this close association, he is required to render periodic reports to the regimental Zampolit on the practical morale of the unit. At this level the company Zampolit is

assisted in the performance of his duties by the Party and Komsomol members in the unit.

The Communist Youth League has answered the call since 1917 and continues to be the trail blazer in the defense of the Motherland.<sup>28</sup> More than 2.8 million Communist Youth League members are serving in the Soviet armed forces; this represents a considerable reserve for the military political workers. The mission of Komsomol is as follows:

The main mission of Komsomol organizations in the Army and Navy consists of binding the young troops of the CPSU, of educating them in the ideas of Marxism-Leninism and the revolutionary, combat and work tradition of the Party, the Soviet people and their armed forces, in the spirit of selfless devotion to the Socialist Motherland, bravery, courage and heroism, readiness to give all one's powers, if necessary, even one's life for the defense of the Homeland.<sup>29</sup>

The Komsomol is hierarchically structured, with youth groups extending down to platoon, section, and gun and boat crew. Members not meeting rigid standards can be excluded from the roles upon a two-thirds vote of members attending the Komsomol meeting.

All Komsomol organizations within the regiment come under a Komsomol Bureau headed by a secretary. Like the Party secretary, the Secretary of the Komsomol Bureau is theoretically elected to his post, though in actuality he is nominated by the regimental Zampolit. The Bureau supervises the work of various Komsomol organizations in the regiment and coordinates their activities with those of the political officers and the Party organizations.

The Komsomol membership in the Army might be compared to the "Stakhanovites" (individuals who set production records) in

Soviet industry. By their youth and enthusiasm they are expected to set the example and spur others on to greater achievements. Before maneuvers, inspections, marches, or even athletic events, the Zampolit gathers the Komsomolites together for a pep talk and gives them detailed instructions as to what they are supposed to do. Where possible, Komsomolites are paired off with non-members in a sort of buddy system. The Komsomolite is expected to encourage his buddy to take an active part in all phases of military life.<sup>30</sup>

To this point the ways in which the Main Political Administration exercises political control over the military have been discussed. The other organization is the military arm of the Committee of State Security (KGB). Not much has been written in the West about the KGB. Captain Myagkov a mid-1970 defector called it "the Politburo's Army of Spies," the "political working organization of the CPSU" in the Soviet armed forces.<sup>31</sup> Captain Myagkov noted that KGB elements operate in the Soviet Army and Navy and in Border (KGB) and Internal (MVD) Troop detachments. Their mission is to insure the security of state and military secrets and to organize counterespionage measures.<sup>32</sup>

To accomplish this task, the KGB deploys uniformed KGB officers to man "special offices" down to regimental levels. In one motorized rifle division in East Germany, there were 17 KGB personnel in the division's "00," while two officers were assigned to each motorized rifle regiment's "00."<sup>33</sup>

KGB officers are feared by all, including commanding officers, since without KGB approval no officer can be sent to a

military academy or get promoted.<sup>34</sup> It goes without saying that without a politically "pure" background, no officer will be approved for a nomenklatura position -- positions such as divisional commander or deputy for political affairs, army commanders, their deputies and above -- require Central Committee approval. As Myagkov describes the special privileges enjoyed by top echelons of the Party's "Mafia," the pressure for conformity, for pleasing the security organs, must be inordinately strong.<sup>35</sup> Soldiers can simply be dismissed from the service; and in the Soviet Union, a bad conduct discharge means a life of sheer misery.

The climate of fear and suspicion created by KGB agent nets recruited in each unit can be appreciated from remarks Major General Titov, head of the KGB Directors of Special Departments in the Group of Soviet Forces, Germany. He is reported to have made this observation at a conference in 1970:

I fully understand that it is difficult to catch spies. There are after all, few of them. And not one of them comes himself and says, 'I am a spy.' But we must go to work. So, if there are no spies, then you must unmask anti-Soviets and other internal enemies. They are always to be found, and if you can't find any, then create them.<sup>36</sup>

Before one dismisses Myagkov's recollection of the general's talk, it is well to recall that such "creativity" was the hallmark of the Chekists during the Civil War and Great Purge periods. Myagkov cites a number of incidents which indicate that the KGB continues to employ entrapment today.

The regular officers dislike the Zampolit because he uses too much of the training time, and he also writes the efficiency

report's on every officer's political reliability, a prime factor for promotion. The KGB agents, however, are not so much disliked as feared. Their reputation over the last five decades has been so bad that nothing can eradicate the automatic chill down the spine when the name of the secret police is mentioned.

The Soviet elite has attempted to insure political reliability of the armed forces by establishing a whole series of overlapping and redundant control mechanisms. They place such a premium on control that a degree of efficiency is willingly sacrificed. The entire system is oriental to the degree that no one body enjoys complete trust; in a uniquely communist system of "checks and balances," even the KGB is played off against the Main Political Administration.

The Main Political Administration's avowed mission is "struggle for the general line of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, permitting no compromise or indulgence." Among the MPA's many functions is the operation of all Soviet military papers, journals, and publishing houses, and the selection, assignment, and certification of political reliability of all Soviet officers. The KGB also participates in the latter process; no Soviet officer can aspire to any sort of career without demonstrating his political conviction.

An analysis of the Political Officer's role in the Soviet Military establishment highlights the difficulties involved in using the role of the political officer as a barometer of Party-military relations. Calls to increase the role of the Zampolit have been interpreted as a reflection of Party determination to gain a firmer hold on the military leadership. Another

explanation is that the Party is continuing to maximize the Zampolit's efficiency in discharging his/her various duties. Political control, in the sense of Party monitoring of the military professional, is only one of a broad array of MPA responsibilities.

#### POLITICAL-MILITARY RIFTS

We have now seen how carefully and thoroughly the Soviet government politicizes the Soviet military establishment. This system of oversight and indoctrination may serve the Party well, but it also causes problems. During the 1960's such issues as ideological training taking precedence over technical training, political workers in leadership positions, and, most importantly, the principle of one man command caused rifts between the Party and the professional military.<sup>37</sup> The invasion of Czechoslovakia and the lack of unity concerning the Strategic Arms Limitation talks took the party - military rift into the 1970's.<sup>38</sup> The military expressed its views on such issues as detente, Western ideological subversion, the need for growth of heavy industry for defense purposes, the expanding external role of the Soviet armed forces in support of foreign clients, and the continued importance of improving party-political indoctrination of the armed forces. Initially, the Party elite tried to cooperate with the vocal military leaders. This approach did not work. As a result, the Party was forced to reassert its direct control over the armed forces.<sup>39</sup>

In May of 1976, L.I. Brezhnev was awarded the military rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union as Chairman of the USSR Defense



Council. This move made Brezhnev the Supreme Commander of the Soviet armed forces, as well as the supreme state authority over all other non-military war-related matters. This action was supposed to demonstrate very forcefully and dramatically the Party's determination to control the military. However, these actions only served to underscore the uneasiness which the party perceived concerning its ability to control the armed forces, not only on the highest level but also on the level of the common soldier.<sup>40</sup>

#### PERESTROIKA AND THE MILITARY

On March 11, 1985 Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev was announced as the new General Secretary [of the Central Committee] of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union following the death of Konstatin Ustinovich Chernenko. At age 54 Gorbachev became the youngest General Secretary since Joseph Stalin and the first Soviet leader born after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. He offers a refreshing contrast to the aged Soviet hierarchy of the past several decades, and his vigorous, worldly image has signaled a new Soviet approach to domestic and foreign affairs.

Mikhail Gorbachev was born in 1931 in the Stavropol region of Russia and became a member of the Communist Party in 1952 while attending Moscow University. After receiving his law degree in 1955, he returned to Stavropol where he became active in the Party and also specialized in running collective farms. In 1970 he was selected first secretary of the regional party, and in 1971 he became a full member of the Party's Central

Committee (of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union).

Gorbachev's jump to the Moscow elite began in 1978 when he became Central Committee secretary for agriculture and was further sustained by his selection to candidate member of the Politburo in 1979 and full member in 1980.

Traditionally, new Soviet leaders have taken steps to consolidate their power; however, the speed and scope of Gorbachev's progress are indeed remarkable. In April 1985 Yegor Ligachev and Nikolai Ryzkov, two Gorbachev supporters were given full membership in the Politburo. Viktor Chebrikov, the Soviet KGB chief, also became a member. Andrei Gromyko, one of the remaining members of the Soviet "old guard," was "promoted" to the largely ceremonial position of President of the Supreme Soviet, and another Gorbachev supporter and newly promoted full member of the Politburo, Edward Shevardnadze, replaced Gromyko as Foreign Minister.<sup>41</sup>

Gorbachev inherited a military superpower but it was fraught with both internal and external problems. The stagnant years of the Brezhnev regime and the void in rule brought about by his short-lived successors, Andropov and Chernenko, seriously damaged the political control of the military. This damage, combined with Gorbachev's expressed desire to strengthen the Soviet economy, has provided him with his greatest challenge.

Since February 1985, Gorbachev has made twelve changes in the Soviet High Command. The latest was his selection of General Dmitriy Yazov, who was selected to replace Sergei Sokolov as Defense Minister on 30 May 1987. Yazov's selection came at a time when the military was not so enthusiastic about Perestroika

(restructuring). The military's low-key response did not please Gorbachev. He met with senior military officers in Minsk and told them that "we now need energetic leaders who can command and communicate, people with initiatives who are competent in their work."<sup>42</sup> After this meeting the military press became more active in calling for support of perestroika in the armed forces.

The changes in military leadership have made the message very clear. The military, like the rest of the Soviet society, would be expected to contribute directly to the country's economic revitalization. General Lizichev, head of the MPA, has intensified the efforts of the military political apparatus to push perestroika within the armed forces. This effort focuses on a more modern approach to training officer cadre in efficient management of men and material.

#### CONCLUSION

Gorbachev's "get tough" message was not fully appreciated until a young West German flew a small airplane 700 kilometers into Soviet air space and landed at the gates of the Kremlin on 28 May 1987. Not only was this a very humiliating experience for the Soviet Union's political and military leadership, it also suggested that Gorbachev had been right all along about the need for major changes in the way the military functioned.<sup>43</sup> As a result of this incident, Marshal Koldunov was relieved as commander of the Air Defense Forces, Marshal Sokolov, Minister of Defense, was retired and replaced by General Yazov. To have done nothing to these generals would have made a mockery of

perestroika. Furthermore, their removal served as a clear warning to those in the military that Gorbachev will continue to control the armed forces by insuring that its senior leadership embraces his philosophy completely.

The Zampolit's role will become more demanding in the future. Each year young people called up for military service are better educated than their predecessors. A growing number are familiar with Western music and, to some extent, with Western youth culture. Indoctrinating youth who have been interested in blue jeans and long hair in the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism may pose some problems.

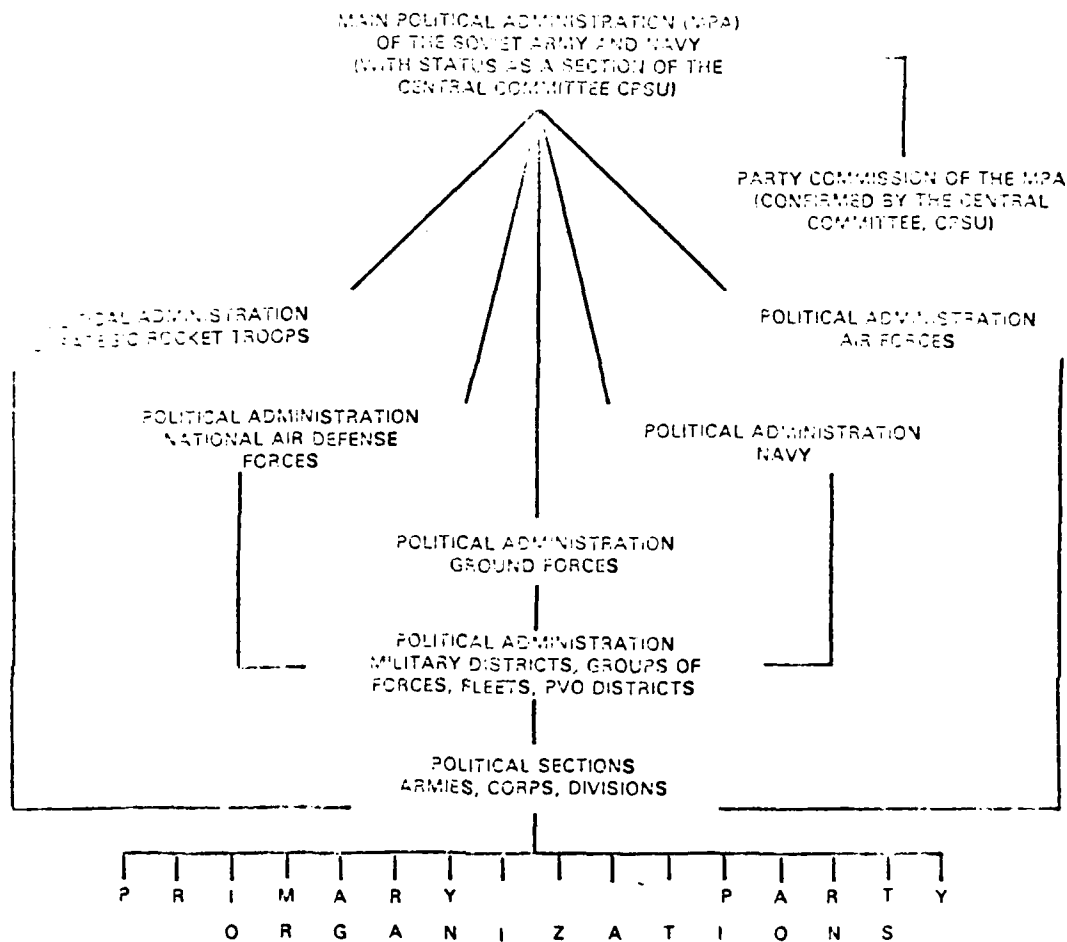
This will make the political officer's work even more important. One of the reasons for reducing the length of military service to two years was to make it possible for practically every Soviet male to serve in the Soviet Army and Navy and thus receive compulsory Party indoctrination. Soviet citizens are coming into contact with foreigners more and more each year. This is the price that the Soviet leadership is paying to acquire foreign technology and to earn hard currency through tourist travel. Political officers must affect the possible influence of foreign contacts and spell any foreign ideas that may remain.

Soviet concern about minority draftees goes beyond the potential impact on combat capability. The Party views the special environment within the military as an opportunity to dilute compelling nationalist loyalties and to instill approved Socialist values in soldiers of the non-Slavic minorities. Along with this political socialization the political officer will

conduct language classes for those minorities with low levels of Russian fluency.

In summary, the large number of young civilians cycling into the military system to serve as conscripts also means that there is a constant flow of ex-soldiers returning to civilian life. They bring with them the outlook, vocabulary, and values of the two years military service. This factor is reinforced by the fact that the behaviors and values sponsored by the military socialization program, to which the draftee has been exposed, are compatible with those of the New Soviet Man. The typical discharged soldier leaves his military unit more mature, more easily influenced, and more passively obedient than when he was drafted. These qualities will help him adjust to adulthood in a civilian world that expects those characteristics.

The political officer today enhances the tactical commander's ability to accomplish his mission and can assist in improving unit readiness in view of his technical qualifications. The commander needs the political officer's support not only to secure the success of his unit, but also to insure his personal success.



NOTE: PARTY COMMISSIONS ARE FORMED UNDER ALL POLITICAL ORGANS.

Figure 1. Principal Structure of Political Organs in the Soviet Armed Forces.

SOURCE: General-Lieutenant M. G. Sobolev,  
et al: *Partiynoye Polozheniye*  
*Raboty v Sovetskoy Voynushcheykh*  
*Silakh* (Party-Political Work in the Soviet Armed Forces)  
(Moscow: Voenizdat, 1974), p. 154.

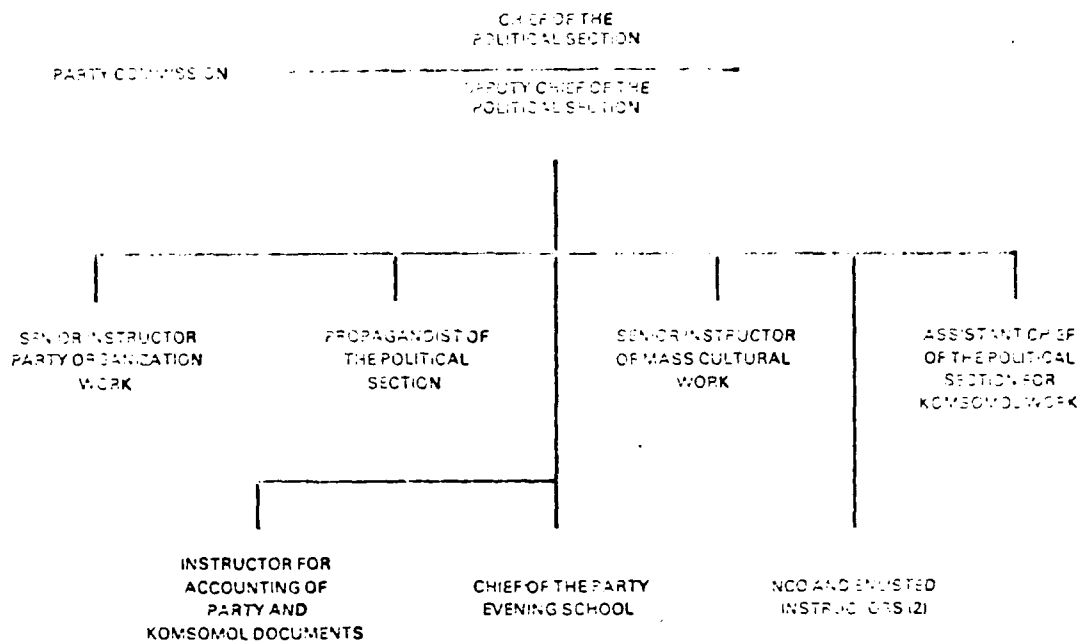


Figure 2. Structure of the Political Section of Armies, Corps, and Divisions.

SOURCE: General-Lieutenant M. G. Sobolev, et al.  
Partiya-Politicheskiye Razbitya v  
Soverskikh Vooruzhennykh Silyakh  
 [Party-Political Work in the Soviet Armed Forces]  
 (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1974), p. 156

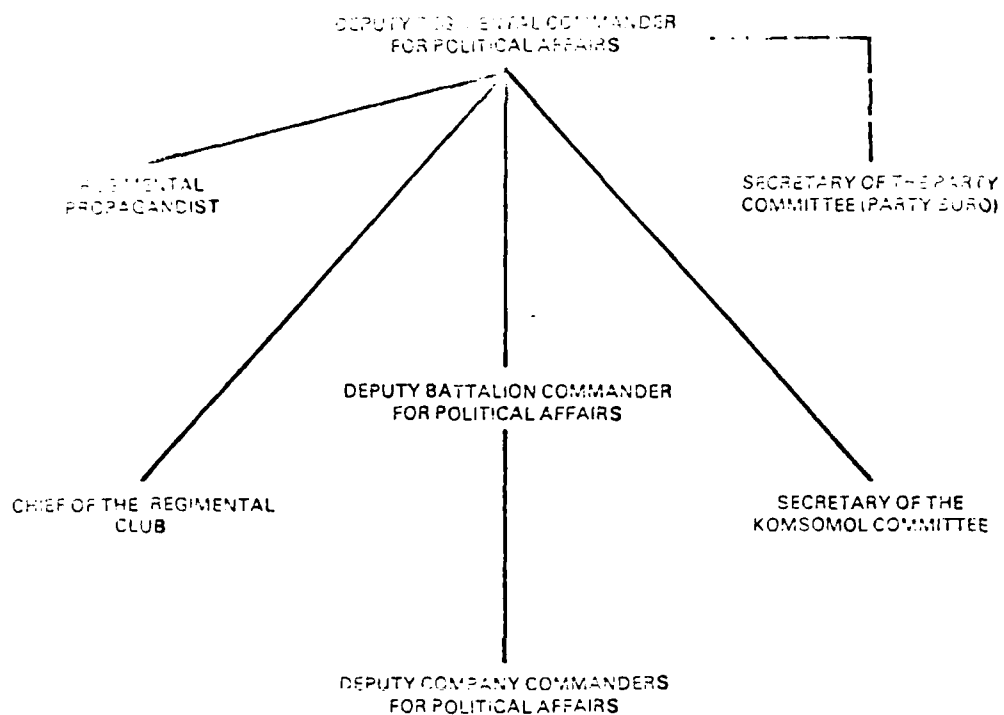


Figure 3. Structure of the Regimental Party-Political Apparatus.

SOURCE: General's Lieutenant M. G. Sobolev, et al. Partynno-  
politicheskaya Rabota v Sovetskikh Vozdushnykh Silyakh  
(Party-Political Work in the Soviet Armed Forces)  
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